

WILDERNESS SURVIVAL GUIDE



**A DEVOTIONAL STUDY FOR
NAVIGATING THE SPIRITUAL LIFE**

A.J. DUMMITT

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**Wilderness
Survival
Guide**

A Devotional Study for Navigating the Spiritual Life

by

A.J. Dummitt

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To my parents Wayne and Lynn, most of the principles I learned in this book were all thanks to you. I couldn't imagine there being any better parent for me than you two. I love you and appreciate you very much.

To the church I am privileged to pastor, The Crossroads, UPC: Thank you for being real people, loving God, and pressing toward the mark. I am blessed to be your pastor, thanks for joining me on the journey.

To Denise, you are incredibly selfless and efficient. Thanks for being a great friend, and for pushing me to become a better writer. You're a real blessing.

Dedication

This book is lovingly dedicated in special memory of my late Grandfather Wesley Edgar Dummitt.

Since your passing in July of 2007, I have renewed passion and desire for all that you preached by word, song and life until the day you left us to be with your two closest friends, Jesus and Grandma.

Praise for Wilderness Survival Guide

"A.J. Dummitt has written a concise study on an important subject, 'survival'. Anyone training new converts and working with today's youth should consider using this basic guide to help them navigate the 'wilderness'. Wilderness Survival Guide gets straight to the point and hits the key elements that lead to a strong positive life." - **Paul D. Mooney - Indianapolis, IN**

"Let Bro. Dummitt walk you step by step through the incredible miracles that God has done and will do for his children. You will lay this book down feeling encouraged and refreshed no matter your wilderness experience." - **Bishop Roland Baker - Auburn Hills, MI**

"Pastor Dummitt, Well done. It is obvious by the style of writing that you have taken your intended audience to heart (new converts) and given them some practical and valuable tools to grow their walk. I really appreciate your taking the time to write.... I believe that you will continue to work on writing projects which share your heart, and are helpful to people." - **Travis K. Miller - Hazelwood, MO**

"The Wilderness Survival Guide speaks of the difficulty of leaving spiritual Egypt. A.J.'s book shows the miraculous way God will navigate us, with our help, through the wilderness. In the Wilderness Guide, Dummitt shows us again how great God is, and how strong we can be in his hands.

If you desire to know God more perfectly, buy this book. It is a guide that will bring you through the wilderness to the Promise Land." - **O.C. Marler - Gray Court, SC**

"A.J. Dummitt, in Wilderness Survival Guide has articulately and clearly written a survival guide for the saint of the most high. It is a must read! As a retired Senior Officer of BGPD (Bowling Green Police Department), we were taught early in our KY Law Enforcement Training the importance of survival in how to survive in all situations. Can anything be more important than surviving the satanic attacks upon the saint and the church in these last days?" - **Ivan M. Harrison – Pastor, Hadley Apostolic UPC**

Preface

The Bible is not a dry book, but sometimes people attempt to make it that way. I am amazed at the way Rev. Dummitt makes his point by using the people and incidents of The Word. He does it in such natural way that it seems as though every title or subtitle is a springboard for another lesson, or a “handhold” for the weak.

It is my honest opinion that A.J. Dummitt is destined to be a leader in the writing of books that inspire, uplift and instruct. I would say that this book is the “A” or Alpha, and “Z” or Omega is a long way down the road.

Keep writing, Sir. We need good material like “The Wilderness Survival Guide” with such a truthful, yet positive, tone.

O.C. Marler

Introduction

Survive and Thrive in the Wilderness

Why do we need a “survival guide” to get through the wilderness? The answer is simple; our destination is not the wilderness. Heaven, our ultimate Promise Land, is our destination. However, the wilderness may stand between where you are and where you want to be spiritually. Although the wilderness can be a spiritually dry and difficult terrain in our life, we are just passing through. Navigating the journey and recognizing the obstacles determines spiritual growth and a deeper relationship with God. Often times the struggles we experience can be summed up in our personal perspective and the relationships we cultivate.

For this survival guide and study, we will define “the wilderness” as a stage of life we experience in order to learn principles and lessons that help us have a closer relationship with God and enter into the promises He has for us.

The destination is what drives us, the transformation is what challenges us, but make no mistake we are in for the most exciting adventure whenever we commit our life to Christ. This is a decision that is more important than any other decision we will make in life. When God saves us he delivers us from our sins and the past that had us in captivity. Like the children of Israel, we should come all the way out of Egypt (slavery to sin), and our selfish desires and head for the Promise Land. The “Promise Land” is closeness to God and His purpose for our lives.

On the way to the Promise Land we have to go through the wilderness and there are many lessons to learn along the way. Thankfully God has given us His Word. God’s Word is quick, powerful and sharper than a two-edged sword and should be considered the manual for life and the survival guide for every Christian on earth. In this book my desire is that you will be inspired to trust God more and develop a deeper relationship with the Almighty.

The wilderness is difficult to navigate if you have never been through it before. I respect and admire my elders because they have navigated through the wilderness of life and have gained much wisdom. I am so grateful when these same elders share their wisdom with me for my own life, my family and the church I am privileged to pastor. God always gives us those who help us navigate the wilderness and trials of

life, the question is: will we submit ourselves to them and will we adhere to the wisdom found in the ultimate survival guide – the Word of God?

The purpose of this book is to empower those who want to have a closer relationship with God, and who seek to avoid the pitfalls of the wilderness. Every Christian will face triumphs, temptations, and tests and it helps to know that others have been there before you. While reading this book and studying the Word of God at the same time you will be strengthened in your earthly relationships with others. You can apply the principles from this book to your life and they will be a tremendous blessing to you, your family, your church and your pastor or spiritual authority.

Wilderness Survival Guide is set up as a study tool to be used in correlation with the Bible and daily prayer. There are questions at the end of each short chapter that are designed to help you reflect on your life and personal situations. There are many ways to experience this devotional study guide; in your own personal daily devotion, with a Bible Study partner over coffee, at a small group meeting in someone's home, or even as a class or study with your local church. Whatever way you experience the Wilderness Survival Guide it can minister to you in many different dimensions.

Do you want to keep wandering around in a spiritually dry desert like you have for the past several weeks, months, or years? Are you ready to arrive in what God has promised you? Then it is time to take the journey. It is time to learn the principles and lessons the Israelites in the book of Exodus teach us. Look at what 1 Corinthians 10:11 says, "Now all these things happened unto them for ensamples (*examples*): and they are written for our admonition, upon whom the ends of the world are come." I challenge you to read, study, pray and ask God to let this experience change your life. I know it has changed me, and it is changing the church that I am privileged to pastor. I know you are going to be blessed and strengthened on this spiritual adventure...I bid you Godspeed.

1 Corinthians 10:1-11 (KJV)

1 Moreover, brethren, I would not that ye should be ignorant, how that all our fathers were under the cloud, and all passed through the sea;

2 And were all baptized unto Moses in the cloud and in the sea;

3 And did all eat the same spiritual meat;

4 And did all drink the same spiritual drink: for they drank of that spiritual Rock that followed them: and that Rock was Christ.

5 But with many of them God was not well pleased: for they were overthrown in the wilderness.

6 Now these things were our examples, to the intent we should not lust after evil things, as they also lusted.

7 Neither be ye idolaters, as *were* some of them; as it is written, The people sat down to eat and drink, and rose up to play.

8 Neither let us commit fornication, as some of them committed, and fell in one day three and twenty thousand.

9 Neither let us tempt Christ, as some of them also tempted, and were destroyed of serpents.

10 Neither murmur ye, as some of them also murmured, and were destroyed of the destroyer.

11 Now all these things happened unto them for ensamples: and they are written for our admonition, upon whom the ends of the world are come.

CHAPTER ONE

Wilderness Lesson 1: Victorious Times

The Value of Praise and Worship

READING: EXODUS 15

Key Verse: Exodus 15:21

*...Sing ye to the Lord, for he hath triumphed gloriously; the horse and his rider
hath he thrown into the sea.*

Wow, somebody sounds happy! Miriam (Moses sister) and all those women dancing with her in the verse before were giving this expression of praise to the Lord. To fully appreciate this we must remember what they had just experienced in Exodus chapter 14. Whenever we are following God, there will be great times of victory. God will fight our battles.

Whenever the past is trying to overtake us and it seems as if there is a tidal wave of fury in our rear view, we must stand still and let God fight for us. The children of Israel were on their quest for the land God had promised them. The first step required on their part was to leave Egypt and all the ways of Egypt behind. God delivered them out of the hand of Pharaoh and his armies, but they had to be willing to leave Egypt and follow Moses. The first step toward victory in our lives will be to leave our sinful past, and the ways and habits we have picked up that are contrary to God.

THE GREAT ESCAPE AND FOLLOWING THE LEADER

Leaving “spiritual Egypt” is not always easy, after all it is what we know, it is what we are used to. But the pain and affliction in our body and soul that we suffer should cause us to want to leave, to find a better way, to follow the God who offers rest for our soul. Navigation through the wilderness of life is difficult at best; we must follow God’s leading if we are to complete the journey. The Israelites followed a pillar of cloud by day and a pillar of fire by night. God will always provide clear direction for us

if we are willing to follow. The obstacles we come to while following God are merely an opportunity for increased victory in our spiritual lives.

“People call things problems that aren’t problems. They’re facts of life.”

—Fred Smith, *Leadership*, Vol. 1, no. 1.

Don’t despise the difficult times. Victory is not something that we have to fret about when we are following God closely. God will make a way. If He has to make dry land appear out of the sea, He’ll do it. If He has to overthrow an entire army to save thousands of defenseless people, He’ll do it. God may let water flow from a rock, let quail fall from heaven, or even feed over 1 million people every day in a wilderness for several years just because HE CAN!

Can God provide you with a better job, the right job? Can God heal your broken marriage, and restore what has been lost? Can God save your family that seems so un-interested in the church and the ways of God? Is God able to deliver you from a life of addiction, pain, and shame and give you hope, peace and joy? The answer to all of these and many more scenarios is YES!

WITH GOD – WE WIN!

Victory is certain with God. Time after time God has proven His power and authority in lives that would submit to Him. Those that follow God and trust Him are not the weakest of people like the world would have us believe. People that submit their lives to God and commit themselves to the process of becoming more like Him are the wisest of people in this world. With God, we win! It may not always be in the ways we think of success, but in the long run we are far better off with God than without Him. The children of Israel found this to be true, but it wasn’t always pleasant. In Exodus 15 we find them extremely happy and elated because of the victory God had just given them over their former captors.

Imagine living hundreds of years under the rule and control of a people who made life miserable for you and your family. The Hebrews were used by the Egyptians to work miserable jobs and endure incredible mistreatment all for just living in the same area. The Pharaoh that started this slavery of the Hebrews was afraid that the children of Israel would “take over” the country, because there were so many of them. So after the Egyptian ruler made them slaves and this did not solve the population problem, he ordered the killing of all the Israeli baby boys to squelch the dilemma. Without getting to far into Biblical typology concerning Egypt, I would like to point out a few similarities between that Pharaoh and the enemy of our souls, the devil.

The devil is afraid of what you and I can become, so he does whatever is necessary to keep us bound. He’ll use addictions, temptations, sin, guilt, shame, fear, and intimidation to keep us in spiritual slavery. The devil is fine with us going to church as long as we are spiritually bound. He doesn’t even mind if we do things for the church and the ministry as long as he has a few strings attached to our lives.

Whenever someone makes up their mind to follow God completely, they must cut all ties that hold them back. This is where true victory begins, moving on from the slavery of the past. The good news is that God already has a plan and process ready for your life, and He is waiting to take you to a better place.

The better place is where we find the children of Israel in Exodus chapter 15. The previous chapter they had faced and overcome their first and second major obstacles; the Red Sea and Pharaoh's army. The Israelites trusted and followed God, they were now on the other side of the Red Sea. The water washing onto the shore still had the debris from Pharaoh's army in its wake. God's chosen people were rejoicing gleefully and praising Him for the victory. There will be times in our spiritual journey when we feel the same way. We will be ecstatic about our freedom in God, and awed by His dynamic power in our lives.

LET THE GOOD TIMES ROLL

When the good times come, relish them, write them down, tell everyone about them, and most of all commit them to long-term memory...You will need them. The previous sentence may sound pessimistic but it is definitely not meant to scare you, only prepare you. Every one of us know how to handle failure properly...pick ourselves up and try harder, get right back on the horse and try again! What most people have trouble with is SUCCESS, and how they handle successes in their lives. Just because you have a great week or a great month, or a great year does not mean you will always remain on top of the mountain.

SILLY WOODPECKER

A woodpecker tapped with his beak against the stem of a tree just as lightning struck the tree and destroyed it. He flew away and said, "I didn't know there was so much power in my beak!" When we bring the Gospel there is a danger that we will think or say, "I have done a good job." Don't be a silly woodpecker. Know where your strength comes from. It is only the Holy Spirit who can make a message good and fruitful.

—Corrie Ten Boom in *Each New Day*. Christianity Today, Vol. 36, no. 3.

VICTORIES and OBSTACLES

When my wife (Cathy) and I found out that we were expecting our first child, we were so happy. We had been married for almost four years and had anxiously waited for the right time to have children. At the time we were in full time youth ministry at a growing church, and we were truly enjoying the experience. Shortly after the elation of finding out about my wife's pregnancy we found out that we would not be able to stay in our full time ministry position and that it was time for us to move on. WOW, you talk about an obstacle...this was a major test for us.

We had many people around us just encouraging us to get out of the ministry and do something else with more stability. We evangelized for the next six months

pulling a travel trailer all over the eastern half of the United States. Finally we got to the stage in Cathy's pregnancy that we could not travel and we had to stay "home" more, so I was preaching at churches that were within driving distance. My family and my wife's family were living in the same area and were excited about our soon coming new addition, but were not very thrilled with our situation of employment. Then something happened.

We came to minister at a church that was only about 35 miles from where we were currently living. We thought it would just be for the weekend, but God had other plans and within two months we were voted in to be the next pastor of the church. Both of our families were elated that God had opened the door for our ministry so close to where they were, and we were grateful for God's direction in our lives. This was truly a victory in our lives, one where we held our peace and let the Lord work on our behalf. We rejoiced and gave God the praise. We had our beautiful baby girl – Julia the very next week and everything seemed to be going wonderfully well.

Then fresh from the victory and joy that we were experiencing, the second week after we were voted in we had another obstacle. A letter to the church stated that if certain changes were not made to the campus and facilities costing over \$10,000.00, the city would be shutting our building down. We had not even moved to town yet. I knew I had to work in addition to the pastoral position to support the family because of the current financial condition of our church; this was definitely a new and unexpected hurdle for us. We knew that God had brought us to this church, so we moved forward by the help of God. The city never did shut us down; God made a way for us to pave the parking lot, and we continue to be victorious with Him.

Every time something great happens in our lives, it should remind us how great and awesome our God really is. Every time He provides for us, and blesses us we should rejoice in the victory, and also let it strengthen our resolve for the road ahead.

IN HIM...WE LIVE, MOVE, and EXIST

Many people get so "inflated" by their successes that they crumble at the first sight of trouble. It is great to celebrate victory, we should take time to praise and worship God for His awesome power in our lives. However, you will face another trial somewhere down the road. You will need strength from the victory to sustain you when you see your next obstacle. Don't get caught up so much in the victory that you forget God gave it to you. When you get to the next difficult situation, remember who got you through the last one. The book of Acts tells us that in Him we live and move and have our being (or existence). Times of victory are times of strengthening and renewing, enjoy them, relish them, but above all, - place them in your memory book for future reference.

My brother and I were preparing to leave the bank with his 5-year-old daughter, Melissa. She ran ahead to open the heavy door. She huffed, puffed, and pushed; she stepped back and started again.

Finally she pushed with all the might her little body could muster—and the door opened!

She was unaware that her father's hand, high above her head, had actually pushed the door open for her. I laughed at my niece, but then realized God does the same for me every day.

—Vicky Marra, Franklin, Ohio. *Today's Christian Woman*, "Heart to Heart."

WHAT'S NEXT?

Earlier I stated that in Exodus 15 we find the Israelites extremely happy and elated because of the victory God had just given them over their former captors. That is true, but it all comes to a screeching halt right about verse 22 of Exodus 15. They had not even completely finished rejoicing over the miraculous victory God had given them when they ran into a small dilemma. No drinking water for over 1 million people including babies and children. Wow, what were they going to do? Could the great God who just delivered them, now provide for them? Is it possible to have enough drinking water for that many people in the middle of a hot and dry wasteland? We will cover that as our topic in chapter 2 of our Wilderness Survival Guide.

Chapter 1 - Questions for Study and Meditation:

1. What commitments have you made to God to leave your past behind?
2. How are you following God closely in the life-long process of becoming more like Him?
3. Since following God, name some major victories you have experienced.
4. What are some areas of struggle for you that you could use fresh victory in?
5. Who in your life could benefit from hearing one of your victory stories, and which one would you share if they gave you the opportunity?
6. How long has it been since you experienced a victory where you praised and exalted God with great excitement?
7. What lesson(s) have you gained from Exodus 15 and the children of Israel so far?
8. Are there any "strings" attached to your life from the enemy of your soul? If so, what are they?
9. What steps will you make this week to leave carnality (giving in to your flesh), and get closer to God and His process for your life?

10. Write out a short prayer to God about the issues this chapter study has exposed in your life, thank Him for His victory, and seek His help with any obstacles you might be facing.

CHAPTER TWO

Wilderness Lesson 2: Finding Water

Dryness and Spiritual Thirst

READING: EXODUS 15:22-27 / 17:1-7

Key Verse: Exodus 15:22

*... and they went three days in the wilderness, and **found no water**.*

Starbucks was not around the corner, Gatorade had not even been considered, and WATER was obsolete in the desert wasteland. The Israelites had just come from the miraculous delivery of the Red Sea victory and after just a few sweltering days in the sun they couldn't find any water.

God had delivered over one million Hebrews from slavery and certain death, but could He now keep them alive? Dehydrated babies and cranky children, staggering and feeble elderly Israelites, can you imagine the scene? Perhaps some of the children of Israel thought that the God who delivered them in such fashion from the Egyptians would have had a buffet prepared daily and drinking fountains stationed all along the trail. It did not happen that way.

THE HONEYMOON IS OVER

Fire the preacher! What does he know anyway? He brought us out into this wilderness just to kill us. Maybe there weren't enough grave plots in good ole Egypt. At least we had water in Egypt!

Moses had just become the leader of this group probably less than a few weeks ago. The honeymoon was over. They couldn't find water and it was all Moses' fault.

They came to Marah and could not drink the water there because it was bitter. Some of them must have had their fill of the bitter water, however, because bitterness crept into their attitude. They were fed up with Moses (and God) for allowing them and their families to thirst like this. What they failed to see was God's plan for them in all of

the trouble. Moses cries out to God and God gives him the solution for the problem at hand.

I really like Exodus 15:25 where it explains that...*“the LORD showed him a tree”*. You mean this tree had been growing there for several months, possibly even years in the middle of this wilderness and that was God’s solution to their present dilemma? That is incredible!

Not only does God provide for them by solving the bitter water crisis at Marah, but also He gives them a promise of blessing. God promises that He will not put any of the diseases of the Egyptians on them if they will do what is right and follow Him. God not only has the answers to our problems, but He wants to bless us in the process.

The last verse of Exodus 15 states that they came to Elim...*“where were twelve wells of water, and threescore and ten palm trees”*. So just a little further down the road, God has this little oasis paradise set up for them. Plenty of shady palm trees, twelve wells of drinking water, and all they had to do was trust God and go a little further. We really should let this be a great lesson to us about God’s ability to provide all of our needs.

SPIRITUAL DEHYDRATION

They started to really get worked up when they were without water. You know what happens when you get worked up outside on a hot day without plenty of liquids – you start to get dehydrated! This is not only true in the natural, but it is also true of our spiritual lives. Whenever we get worked up and quit trusting God and start blaming people, we are going to be spiritually dehydrated.

How many times has God provided for our needs? If you are anything like me, the answer is over and over and over. Why is it so difficult then to trust God whenever a new circumstance presents itself? Because we are human! The purpose of this book is to help you navigate rough terrain, and help you successfully make it through these admittedly difficult scenarios.

Whenever we STOP trusting God and start blaming others there is a good chance we are spiritually dehydrated. We need the presence of God, we need to bask in God’s glory, we need to drink from the living waters, but they are seemingly out of reach. We have all been, and we will all go through dry times spiritually when it is hard to feel God, hear God and sense His presence. This is not abnormal, but we do have a promise in Hebrews 13:5-6...

*... be content with such things as ye have: for he hath said, **I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee.** So that we may boldly say, The Lord is my helper, and I will not fear what man shall do unto me.*

Maybe you find yourself at a place of “bitter waters”, and you feel “parched” spiritually. When you are having a spiritually “dry” time, it is not a good time to be making MAJOR decisions regarding your life, ministry and family. Let me explain...

THE POWER OF PATIENCE

A great preacher and friend of mine shared with me a time that he went through recently. Let's call him Amos, for the sake of privacy. Amos and I were sharing some things that we were going through as pastors and I was blown away by his honesty with me. Amos told me that until a few months prior to our conversation he had not felt the presence of God in over two years.

I stared at him in stunned disbelief; I could not imagine how it must have felt to go through this period of dryness. So, I asked him the obvious questions. I asked him how it was that he was able to preach every week and what the services were like. He assured me that every week God would use him in the service and for the brief period of time he was in the pulpit he would feel the anointing to deliver God's Word to the people.

Amos went on to explain that many times over the course of two years, people would come up to him after the service and tell him how great the message and the service was and how they felt the presence of God strongly, even how it would change their life. Amos now with tears in his eyes, revealed to me that he did not know what to do at the time to feel the presence of God again. I asked him if it had anything to do with sin in his life (which, because I knew the man seemed absurd). He told me he had asked himself and God the same question many times, but nothing was revealed.

So, I asked, "How did you finally come out of your spiritual dry time?" I have relived our conversation and contemplated the answer he gave me many times since that day. He said, "I just kept trusting God and kept doing everything I knew to do as best as I could do it." Many times, especially in my years of pastoral ministry, I have gleaned strength from these words. Times when I wasn't necessarily doing anything wrong, I was still praying and reading the Bible, fasting and preaching...but I felt as if God were thousands of miles away from me.

"Keep on trusting God even when you can't trace Him," a notable preacher once said. I believe that God allows us to go through these times so that we will be more "thirsty" for him. No, it will not be enjoyable, but it is part of the journey. We will have to learn how to survive whenever the water seems hard to come by. Don't be discouraged, don't blame yourself unless you can pinpoint the problem, and definitely don't blame anyone else. Don't make major decisions that will drastically affect you, your career or ministry and your family. Keep on doing what you know to do!

God will come through for you. In the end, you will see the hand of God at work in your life, but you must be patient. We don't always have what we want, but we always have enough! God knows what we have need of even before we ask Him, so ask, and then wait!

CRISIS AVERTED, NEW PROBLEM

Whew!, Moses must have been breathing a HUGE sigh of relief when they got to Elim. About 45 days into his leadership of the children of Israel they packed up and

moved out from their little paradise called Elim and came to the wilderness of Sin. Everything seemed to be going along great until...Exodus 16:2.

The new issue was not having food. It never fails; it is always something, isn't it? We made it through a spiritually dry time, but now we're about to go hungry. In the next chapter we'll see how God and Moses handle this problem, and what it means for us today.

Chapter 2 - Questions for Study and Meditation:

1. Write down a time when you felt like God was thousands of miles away from you?
2. Have you ever been spiritually dehydrated? How did you know you were?
3. Who have you tried to blame for spiritual "deficiencies" in your life, and why?
4. What word best describes your present spiritual condition?
Drowning Hydrated Thirsty Parched
5. Have you looked for water before, or maybe dealt with bitter waters? Explain.
6. If you have felt like "throwing in the towel" spiritually in the last 6 months, explain what reasons you would use for doing so?
7. When was the last time you felt God's presence and how did it make you feel?
8. What things in your life seem to be sucking the spiritual "life" out of you?
9. Name at least one thing you will do this week to encourage yourself or those around you in your relationship with God.
10. Write out a short prayer to God about the issues this chapter study has exposed in your life, thank Him for living water and ask Him to let it overflow in your life today.

CHAPTER THREE

Wilderness Lesson 3: Finding Food

Hunger and Lean Provisions

READING: EXODUS 16

Key Verse: Exodus 16:3

*And the children of Israel said unto them, Would to God we had died by the hand of the LORD in the land of Egypt, when we sat by the flesh pots, and when we did eat bread to the full; for ye have brought us forth into this wilderness, to **kill this whole assembly with hunger.***

Welcome back wilderness travelers, I am very glad we've made it this far on our journey. We have already learned what it means to go through times of victory as well as spiritual thirst. This lesson will provide some basic strategy to getting through times of hunger and lean provisions. The first two lessons really dealt with spiritual issues we face, but now we will delve into the natural realm as well.

Junk Food Isn't Enough

The biggest enemy of the Church is the development and proliferation of programs to meet people's needs. Everyone has a hunger for God, but our tastes (needs) are screwed up. We've been raised on junk food, so what we ask for is often wrong or twisted.

—Eugene Peterson in *The Door* (Nov./Dec. 1991). *Christianity Today*, Vol. 37, no. 8.

So Moses and God's people get to Elim and everything seems to be going well, and then somebody's stomach starts rumbling. Isn't it crazy how bad things seem on an empty stomach? Whenever I go too long without eating (not counting fasting days),

it seems like things bother me more. Little things that would normally not be an issue, become an issue because my stomach and brain are telling me I need food.

Imagine the victory the children of Israel had just witnessed, and the way God had provided water and shade for them...now the “next big thing” they faced is a food shortage. Again they complained about Moses and Aaron, but in reality they were murmuring against God who had brought them out of Egypt. For some strange reason they were having trouble with trusting God to provide their needs.

YOU GOTTA EAT!

For the children of Israel I am sure it must have seemed like an eternity since they had really eaten. They, like most of us would do, wondered how God was going to be able to provide for them and their children. If you read Exodus 16 the story is very simple, but it shows God providing food to them for every day of the week. They had to collect it six out of seven days, but nevertheless, it was theirs for the taking. I love how God ALWAYS comes through. Whenever there is a great need it's an opportunity for God's mercy and grace to shine through in your life.

Have you ever gone through a time when you weren't sure how the bills were going to get paid, or you didn't know where the next meal was coming from? Did you ever wonder if God would come through for you or your family when the money just wasn't there? If so, then maybe you already understand some of the things we are trying to cover in this chapter. It is so easy for us to be pessimistic and depressed as human beings when life is falling apart. This is why it is so important that we TRUST God and be faithful even when times are tough.

CASE STUDIES

CASE STUDY 1

Sam and Jane, a young couple in their late twenties, with two small children to provide for. Sam loses his job due to cutbacks and is having trouble finding suitable work to pay the bills. Jane is struggling with whether or not to go back to work herself. Where will the money come from, how will they pay the bills and buy food and diapers for the babies? Sam and Jane are going through a real trial of their faith. What would you do?

CASE STUDY 2

Emma and her husband recently divorced because he was unfaithful to her. She is barely making it on the divorce settlement and her small income while trying to take care of her children. Unexpectedly she has to deal with car repairs and house maintenance, which causes her to get behind on her payments. She sticks to her budget faithfully, but at the end of the month neither Peter nor Paul are going to get paid. What is she going to do? What would you do?

CASE STUDY 3

Mac lives week to week and has a long medical history. He barely brings in enough each month to pay his bills and send a small payment to the doctors and the hospital's billing department. His prescription costs scarcely leave him with enough to get a few groceries. This week, his refrigerator quits on him, and many of his groceries go bad. To top it all off, his unpredictable car dies on the way to work, and leaves him frustrated by the side of the highway. What should Mac do? He is really having a bad week. What would you do?

These are just a few examples, but these and many others that you and I both could share happen every day. If this does not affect you, look around; chances are someone in your circle of acquaintances is in need of a financial blessing. I realize that sometimes people find themselves in these circumstances due to poor spending habits or not being faithful in their giving to God, but sometimes financial struggles happen to the most disciplined and faithful among us.

MY EXPERIENCE

As a child, I remember what my parents taught me through their example of faithfulness to God and trust in Him. When I was about four years old my parents took a ministry position at a growing church in Ohio. Our family of four was involved in literally everything going on at the church. Both of my parents were working for the church in some capacity – Dad was teaching in the Christian school and Mom was working in the daycare.

My sister and I both went to the school and were involved in the school programs and athletics. Our family had responsibilities at the services and events on top of my parents' paid positions. There was almost no extra time to work a part time job, but both of my parents found ways to subsidize the income we received from the church so we could make ends meet. The church did the best they could financially, but for my family, money was never the motive for ministry.

I remember many times going to the grocery store called Edwards with my mother to buy groceries for two weeks at a time. Edwards was a bulk store so we could buy larger quantities of our necessities for less. In those days we did not eat out at all unless someone invited us to go and paid for our meal. We would eat all of our meals at home and pack lunches to take to school. To this day I am not sure how my mother did it, but we would buy enough groceries for our family of four to eat breakfast, lunch, dinner and snacks for two weeks for under \$200, and many times much less.

There were Christmases that my parents did not receive anything personally and sacrificed greatly so that my sister and I could have some new clothing that we desperately needed. The reason I share this is so that you will understand what I am about to say.

In the many years of ministry that our family has served, there have been a few very rough times. Never once did we quit giving to the church in tithes or offerings. There are many times when I remember asking for things as a child and getting the explanation of how the money was not there for it. My parents realized (much more than my sister and I), what a blessing it was to serve the Lord by serving others. They also realized that when times were tough, God would always come through. In my adult life, I have found God faithful to provide every need in every situation.

Let me share a few basic principles here for going through times of hunger and lean provisions.

- You are not alone others go through this too.
- You can survive with God on your side.
- Don't give up on God to make more money.
- To quit giving to God means to forfeit your blessings from God.
- If you trust God, and remain faithful, He will come through and meet your needs.
- Tough financial times are not times to throw in the towel, but opportunities to trust God and pray.

The trick of the enemy of our soul is to get us to believe that we are bad people being judged by God for the financial struggles we are facing. If you have been faithful in your giving and are still struggling, you are not alone; others go through financial strain too. As long as you have God on your side, everything will work out for good. It may not seem like it while you are up against it, but you will survive. Resist the urge to quit church, stop being involved, or get involved in get-rich-quick schemes in order to make money fast.

So many people that find themselves in a financial struggle feel extremely tempted to "fix it" on their own. Usually this involves either cutting back in their "giving" or means they must get another job, schedule more hours or do something drastic that takes them away from their family and/or the house of God. Sometimes the very reason God has allowed us to get into this strain financially is so that we will trust Him more. We must learn to exercise patience when it comes to meeting our needs and the needs of our family.

If we quit giving to God we will consequently forfeit our blessing and protection financially. If you can remain faithful during the times of plenty, you can trust God while you are being faithful in times of little. The old saying is, "You can never out-give God". In fact God challenges us to try Him and prove that very principle to be true in the book of Malachi, chapter 3.

At no time should we ever cease to give God what belongs to Him. Tithing is 10% of our increase and that is what belongs to God, no questions asked...we simply bring it back to Him. During times of lean financial status you might feel it necessary to give a little less in your offerings (what you give over and above tithing), but be careful

that you follow God's leading in such. As a pastor and having been around ministry for most of my life, I have witnessed God's blessings on those who were faithful in their giving in the good times and hard times.

Use the time of lean provisions to prove God's faithfulness to you and your family. Trust Him and pray and you will find out that He is truly an on-time God. God always came through for our family, and has blessed us many times over for what we have invested in His Kingdom. There is usually a great blessing on the other side of a financial struggle, be it material or spiritual.

WHAT ABOUT ME?

Maybe as you read this chapter you thought to yourself...yeah that is great, but what about my situation? Everyone will go through different tests, but the faith and trust in God required to get through them will be the same for everyone. One last suggestion I would like to make in this area is that you find an older person or older couple who is wise in this area and that you know to be faithful. Make yourself accountable to them and let them mentor you through the hard times. Money is a big issue, and it never hurts to get advice from someone who has been there.

God will come through for you, and you can take that to the bank! My prayer for all of you reading this is that you will be found faithful and thereby live an extremely blessed life.

WHAT'S NEXT?

Exodus 16 is a terrific encouragement that God can provide for our natural needs as well as our spiritual ones. As if fending for food and searching for water wasn't enough, now the children of Israel and their leadership would have to take on the Amalekites in battle. What happens when you face literal opposition in having a closer relationship with God? If you want to know the secrets to successfully navigating through confrontation and opposition in your quest for closeness with God, read on.

Chapter 3 - Questions for Study and Meditation:

1. What principle stood out to you in this chapter the most?
2. Why do you think people have to endure times of lean provision?
3. If God truly loves us why doesn't He just give us everything we need and want right away?
4. Have you ever successfully navigated through a lean time financially with God? If so, explain.
5. Why should we trust God and be faithful even when things are tough?

6. Tell of a time or experience when you felt like giving up on God because of financial difficulties?
7. What can you do if it seems like the only hope for you is to quit giving to God?
8. What is the difference between tithes and offerings?
9. What scripture(s) give us admonitions on giving, and why are they important? (See Malachi 3)
10. Write out a short prayer to God about the issues this chapter study has exposed in your life, thank Him for providing for your needs and ask Him to help you to always remain faithful.

CHAPTER FOUR

Wilderness Lesson 4: Direct Opposition

Strength for the Fight

READING: EXODUS 17

Key Verse: Exodus 17:8-9

Then came Amalek, and fought with Israel in Rephidim. And Moses said unto Joshua, Choose us out men, and go out, fight with Amalek: to morrow I will stand on the top of the hill with the rod of God in mine hand.

Fighting? Opposition? That is not what we signed up for. Can you understand the state of mind that Israel must have been going through? They had just come out of 400 years of slavery; they were slaves – not trained fighters or soldiers. Nevertheless a fight was what God brought them to. Moses realized that they were going to have to mobilize an army and do it quickly.

Joshua was the man chosen to be the hands-on military leader and so he got an army together. Moses and the others took their positions also. Joshua and the army alone did not win the battle, but Israel was victorious because of the praying of Moses and the uplifting of his hands by Aaron and Hur. Every one had a part to play in the victory, but the fact remains THERE WAS A FIGHT!

The famous saying, "United We Stand, Divided We Fall" is applicable within the church, too. In the battle for Stalingrad during World War II, the Russian commanders ordered their soldiers not to give up any more ground. Without hesitation, the Germans were shooting any of their soldiers who fled. The Russian commanders knew that if even a just a few soldiers fled their post the Germans would then have an opening through which the Russians could pour into the city. Likewise, when the church is divided, Satan finds it so much easier to attack and to conquer because of the division.

Some people may be on the front lines reaching out for souls, others may be teaching Bible studies and winning people to God. Then you have those who are

prayer warriors and intercessors that can really get a hold of God and dispatch angels. However, there will always be a need for those who uplift the hands of the ministry and leadership. If any one area fails, they will all be defeated. Everyone is important and every one has a part to play when the fight is on.

Some would rather not fight; some people would like to think that if they ignore these fights they just go away. There will always be battles we have to fight in the wilderness. Paul talked about the constant struggle even within our own spirit. The flesh is warring against the spirit. We are foolish to act like there is nothing going on. It would be irresponsible of us to turn a blind eye to the battle at hand. For more on the in-your-face type fight we will have to participate in let's take a look at Ephesians chapter 6.

Ephesians 6:13-17 (KJV)

Wherefore take unto you **the whole armour of God**, that ye may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand.

14 Stand therefore, having **your loins girt about with truth**, and having on **the breastplate of righteousness**;

15 And your **feet shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace**;

16 Above all, taking **the shield of faith**, wherewith ye shall be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked.

17 And take **the helmet of salvation**, and **the sword of the Spirit**, which is the word of God:

You are kidding yourself if you think everything is going to go smoothly now because you turned your life over to God. There are still rivers to be crossed, mountains to be climbed and battles to be fought. You will face direct opposition from the enemy of your soul. It is his desire that you become discouraged, depressed and if possible oppressed. You will face opposition on your job at times, not everyone will be as excited about Jesus as you are.

I know of people who have lost their jobs because they would not work during church times or events. There are some people who have been written up for witnessing on the job or teaching a Bible study in the break room. Then there are some people you will work with that cannot stand you just because you are a Christian. These types of situations can be difficult because even if you are not doing anything wrong, some will still try to set you up for failure or embarrassment. Even in ministry, believe it or not, sometimes people disagree. This can become literal opposition as well.

Literal opposition doesn't just come from our work situation; many times it will come through family or friends. These people are the closest to you and the devil knows if he can't get to you directly the next best thing is to get to you through the ones you love. With the divorce rate as high as it has ever been and the courts full of

lawsuits between friends and neighbors it is easy to see the division. You may be able to deal with work, and leave it there, but Satan knows that if he can just affect you at home, and church, and with your circle of friends that you will get discouraged.

Sometimes people are overworked, or not getting enough sleep and various other reasons that make them lash out at one another. The devil knows if he can cause confusion and strife, our human nature will do the rest to bring complete division. We can often deal with the junk at work, because – it's work after all! Then we feel we can let our guard down when we go home to family or when we are talking with close friends. The problem we face is that the enemy of our soul will try and oppose us through the people closest to us.

I understand that most people do not want to admit this, but everyone goes through misunderstandings and hurt feelings. These times can take a toll on you physically and emotionally and drain whatever energy you might have for the Kingdom of God.

If all of your relationships are positive, and you are not having any issues with anyone, you might be facing issues with your finances. When considering finances, ...“It's always something”, meaning that financial struggles seem to find us in every level of life. If everything else is going well, then this is not as big of an issue. Financial struggle can be devastating to a family, to a marriage, to a church, and between friends. Most marriages that end in divorce are related to money issues. The literal opposition we face sometimes is way beyond our control in the realm of finances. Financially astute people will face it as well as the over-spenders. Realize that finances, like the people issues we have discussed are a way that we will face literal opposition in the wilderness.

What should you do when you face literal opposition from the enemy of your soul? Read Ephesians 6:13-17 about how important it is to be properly prepared for the battle. Let's look at that a little closer. First of all you must have a belt of Truth that keeps everything where it is supposed to be. Truth is something that never changes no matter what new information is released. Truth is not relative it is unchanging. The Bible (God's Word) is Truth, we should prepare for battle by studying and knowing the Word of God. It will be much harder for us to get caught up in deception and depression if we are established in Truth. Memorize a verse and quote it each time you find yourself in a challenging situation.

The next piece of armor that must be put on is the breastplate of righteousness. The heart is Satan's primary target. That is why God's Word states, “Love not the world”. It is important to realize that Paul was not meaning a lofty, pie-in-the sky type of pompous religious righteousness. When Paul mentions the breastplate of righteousness he is talking about a practical everyday Biblically principled lifestyle before God. Why is that so important? If we are not living a Biblically principled life there is so much more room for the devil to get in and do his damage. Living close to God in our relationships will protect our heart from the junk this world has to offer and will therefore keep us safer spiritually.



The Roman soldiers wore what some call *caliga*; we would think of them as cleats. They were shoes/boots with studded spikes and nails that would enable the soldiers to stand their ground. It is easy to see why we should prepare our feet with the preparation of the gospel of peace. The peace of God that passes all understanding can give us stability when everything in life is coming at us. We can stand firm in the peace that God gives us, and not be tossed to and fro like a wave of the sea.

It is essential that we properly prepare for the opposition. Many churches are more interested in building crowds than preparing people for the opposition they will face in the wilderness. You must unite with people who care about your preparedness for the battles you will face and pray for you in the wilderness times.



The shield of FAITH! Without faith in God and His ability in your life, you become an easy target for the devil and his fiery darts. We live in a society that has lost respect for God and especially the things of God. Without faith, hope, and trust in God, the church begins to just be a social club accepting anything the world has to say about it. We must KEEP the FAITH, and allow our faith to protect us when the enemy starts hurling his darts at us. Faith can be an offensive weapon at times as well. Faith can be used to smother doubt and disbelief that would like to creep in. You will face opposition, but don't lose faith.

Job endured some of the most atrocious pain, and literal anguish possible, yet could find the faith to say... "Though he slay me, yet will I trust Him." No matter how your body may feel, or what the doctors have told you KEEP THE FAITH! God will come through for you like He did for Job, and David, and the three Hebrew teenagers that were cast into a fiery furnace. Let faith rise up in you, look your enemy in the eye and make your stand. When you have done all you can, STAND!

Obviously we must have our heads properly prepared for battle as well. Our minds have to be sure about who we are and where we are going. One of the major issues that faces the church world today is that many people don't know if they are saved or not. The church is going through what some are calling an identity crisis. So many people have allowed folks to join their church, but they are not really telling them what the Bible says they must do to be saved. Many soldiers can survive a broken arm or injured leg, but the head is what must be - at all times, protected and sure. If you get the salvation issue settled in your mind, you will have a much greater chance of surviving the wilderness and making it to the promise land.

We have already mentioned how important the Word of God is as far as Truth is concerned, but let's look at it from an offensive standpoint. With the Bible, we have the authority to do many great things. The Word of God is what we can stand on. He inspired it; we live it, believe it and see it in action. Whenever we face opposition it is great to know that we have God's Word as a mighty weapon that we can depend on. The Word of God is the same yesterday, today and forever. It never changes. Everything else will pass away, but God's Word will remain. There never has been, nor will there ever be a greater way to face spiritual opposition than with truth and power from the Word of God.

In addition to the full armor of God we find in Ephesians 6, there are a few other things that I feel will make a big impact when facing opposition. First of all, a healthy prayer life, which Paul describes in verse 18 of Ephesians 6. We will never be able to fight and win without prayer. Moses was a man of prayer. We must always go to God for direction, and strength during times of struggle. Where there is much prayer... there is much power!

Secondly, don't be discouraged, keep your integrity. It is difficult when you are going through difficult times and people close to you are hurting you. You might find it very hard not to lash out or fight back in an un-Christian way. Keep your integrity. You will come through this opposition, and those around you will respect you for it. The last thing you want is to make more enemies along the way, or cause yourself or God to be shamed by a moment of weakness. Fight the good fight as Paul says...YOU WILL WIN!

God always comes through for those who refuse to give in to the way of the world. Continue to hold up the hands of ministry and leadership. God has placed those leaders in your life for a reason. Hold them up: in regard and esteem, in prayer and support, and always in fear and honor because God has given them to you to help you make it through your opposition and support you in your passage to the promise land.

WHAT'S NEXT?

In Exodus 17 we learned how important it is to be prepared for the literal opposition that we face in the wilderness. The next chapter over, Moses has a meeting with his Father-In-Law, Jethro. His meeting would produce some incredible

results for Moses. What does it mean for the children of Israel, and how does it apply to us in our journey through the wilderness. Chapter 5 explores the plan you must have for your wilderness journey.

Chapter 4 - Questions for Study and Meditation:

1. What is the most recent thing you feel you have conquered spiritually?
2. What would you say is the hardest fight you have had while serving God?
3. Where have you struggled in recent months that you felt came from spiritual opposition?
4. What “position” do you feel like you would have been placed in the Israelites battle with Amalek? Explain.
5. What ministry do you think God has placed you in for your local church? Explain why.
 - Reacher Teacher Intercessor Supporter Other
6. Tell of a time or experience where you stood your ground (spiritually) and the Lord fought for you?
7. Why do you think it is important to settle the salvation issue in your mind?
8. What are the pieces that make up the whole armor of God?
9. Which pieces do you need to be putting on more frequently than you have in the past? (If applicable to you.)
10. Write out a short prayer to God about the issues this chapter study has exposed in your life, thank Him for fighting for you and ask Him to help you to put on the whole armor everyday and be ready for opposition.

CHAPTER FIVE

Wilderness Lesson 5: Revising the Plan

Changing your Mindset and Your Map

READING: EXODUS 18

Key Verses: Exodus 18:17-18

*And Moses' father in law said unto him, The thing that thou doest is **not good**.*

Thou wilt surely wear away, both thou, and this people that is with thee: for this thing is too heavy for thee; thou art not able to perform it thyself alone.

WARNING! This chapter of the book, and Exodus 18 in the Bible are difficult for some to read because of the content.

In Exodus 18 we find a crisis going on that involves leadership and people with problems that need attention, the trouble was the current leadership (Moses) was not aware of the issue. Let's break this chapter down.

“REUNITING”

Of course the first thing we have is the REUNITING of Moses with his family. I point this out because anyone who has a family knows there is NO WAY Mrs. Moses (Zipporah) would have wanted her husband to be gone all day long solving the problems of the people. Moses was devoting countless hours a day to the needs of the people because his family was not with him at the time, but once the family was reunited; they were going to need some attention too.

In every family there must be a give and take. There must be a consensus reached in order to achieve anything worthwhile. Some sacrifices will be made along the way, but there must be notable attention given to the family unit or else there will be no true family unit. One of the great diseases plaguing our society today is the complete breakdown of the family unit. Families rarely eat together, play games

together, go to church together, and have fun together. Too many “families” today are just several individuals living under one roof.

Sometimes you will have to make a choice and have alone time from your family in order to fulfill what God has put on your heart. Don't let the alone time become permanent though, find the time and the determination to reunite with your family, because they are the most important blessing that God has given to each one of us. Your relationship with God should be followed by great relationships with your family, and subsequently our family's relationship with God.

“REJOICING”

After the reuniting came the REJOICING. Jethro, Moses' father-in-law, rejoiced with Moses and his family in all God had done for them and the children of Israel. This was truly a great time of victory because God had proven mighty in their deliverance and in His overthrowing of the Egyptian army. There was excitement and joy among the leadership as they discussed the great God and all He was doing on their behalf. If families don't rejoice and talk about all the victories and blessings of God in their lives, they will tend to believe they got where they are by their own merits.

Every day and every night during devotions or family time, some mention should always be made about the great things God has done and is doing. We must make sure that our families learn to rejoice in the Lord, because all good things come from Him. An ungrateful family is an unhappy family! If you find a family who rejoices together, not just in church, but also in the family times of every day, you will have found a very happy and peaceful family. Take time to rejoice, as often as possible with your family.

“REALIZATION”

The next item we read about in Exodus 18 is the REALIZATION. Moses and Jethro sit all day long dealing with people's issues and giving people a “word” from the Lord. This is what made sense for Moses, God spoke to him, and He would be the best Judge for the people. So they had this process that Moses would go all day hearing and answering the needs of all the people. However, Jethro after one day of this process, Pop Jethro declares the truth to Moses. It probably was difficult for Moses to hear. After all, Moses just led over one million Jews out of Egypt, they crossed an impossible Red Sea, got through the hard times of no water or food, and fought a successful campaign against the Amalekites. Then Jethro drops in for one day and tells Moses that what he is doing is not good.

Can you imagine the difficulty of the REALIZATION for Moses? It took his Father-in-Law, an outsider to come in and show him what needed to be done. Sometimes it will take someone from the outside to notice the problem and help us have a realization. There are times when we need others to help us see what we cannot see – the Big Picture. Jethro saw that this was wearing Moses out, and the people were not necessarily thrilled with the arrangements either. It is rarely ever a “fun” thing to

see that you could be doing things better. Whether it be in your home, on your job, with your kids, in your ministry, or basically any area of life.

Not too many people like hearing where they could improve on what they are doing. That is the difference between a wise person and a foolish person. The book of Proverbs gives us this insight:

Proverbs 9:8-9 (KJV)

Reprove not a scorner, lest he hate thee: rebuke a wise man, and he will love thee. Give *instruction* to a wise *man*, and he will be yet wiser: teach a just *man*, and he will increase in learning.

The truth is that wise people are TEACHABLE people. Moses was a very wise and teachable person; he was also very humble. God always brings someone at the right time, in the right way, to bring us the words we need to hear. Many people think that this means that the “leader” should then listen to anyone and everyone that comes along because they have good advice. Notice that Jethro had never been “under” Moses leadership; in fact he was Moses “elder” so to speak. God always moves in the proper chain of command. Whatever God wants His leadership to know, He has a way of getting the right message through proper means.

Many people may have opinions and suggestions that they (and others) might feel would be the proper direction, but God might not necessarily inspire their ideas. Some people just have a lot of great ideas, and they are not willing to commit to make them happen, they just want to be the one with “the great ideas”. Ultimately we all need people in our lives that will tell us what we need to hear, rather than just what we want to hear. This is why it is so important for us to have leadership over us to help us go the direction God has for us. There is an old saying that goes something like this...“If you stop every time you hear the dogs bark, your road will never end.”

Simply put, don’t try to listen to everybody, find someone in your life that God speaks to you through. You will know that it is God if you don’t always like what they are saying and they constantly challenge you to get closer to God. Let that person be a voice in your life. Take their good Godly advice and adhere to it. Pray that God will speak to them for you. We all need a voice in our life, but be careful of the voice that speaks to you and appeals to your flesh. Listen for the voice of God, and then follow it. The realizations God brings into our life through a true voice can make all the difference between heaven and hell for our eternity. Seek godly counsel (Psalms 1).

“RE-PRIORITIZING and RE-FOCUSING”

The next thing Moses and Israel experienced was a reprioritizing of the time and energy of the leadership. There was an empowering decision made that gave Moses an opportunity to be more effective. Then there was a refocusing on the task at hand. Jethro had given Moses a solution, and Moses acted upon it. Too many people today are quick to pick up on problems and voice them loudly without ever giving a solution.

Every one of us have the ability to solve problems, some of us need more help than others. The Bible says that if any man lacks wisdom that he should ask it of the Lord and the Lord will give it to him. (James 1:5)

Wherever there is a problem, there is a solution. Look again at your priorities. Ask yourself, what are my priorities, what are my goals, and what is my direction. Those three tend to get off track with each other.

For an example of Priorities, I will use my own life. My Priorities: (1) God, and my relationship with Him, (2) My Family, my relationships with them and our relationship as a family with God, (3) Ministry, serving others and spreading the Gospel of Jesus Christ, (4) The Church I pastor, serving them with God's love and developing them into Christ-Like character, (5) Hobbies and Fun, (6) Personal Accomplishments.

If my priorities are not right, or my actions (direction) and goals get out of line with my priorities, I really become miserable and feel like I am just spinning my wheels. There are times when I just have to look at where things are headed and re-examine where I should be in light of my priorities in life. Sometimes our Priorities and Goals are great, but we fail to have the discipline in our actions (direction) to get where we need to be. This creates tension and unrest in our lives and spirit. Our family is usually the first one to know if we are not living life by our stated priorities.

Every once in a while we all have those moments like Moses had...not that we are BAD people or that we couldn't keep on going just like we are going. It is just that moment where we KNOW that the way we are headed is "not good". We could do better, we could be more effective, and we could have more time for more important things. That is when realization meets the decision to Re-prioritize and Re-focus in order to be most effective.

"RE-ORGANIZE"

In the end if we will RE-ORGANIZE our lives, families and situations to the leading of the Lord, we will be far more successful in life, and it will get us out of the wilderness more quickly. Don't be afraid of the change, everything that is alive and growing is constantly changing. We all have an area or areas of our life, family, ministry, or careers that could use a little re-organizing. Refocus your energy, re-prioritize your goals, and re-organize your methods to a manner that is pleasing to God and more effective than what you are doing now.

For some it will be as easy as just simplifying their lives. Taking things out that don't fit in with their priorities and goals. In this complicated society we live in, Simple is Good! Don't make it harder on yourself by adding in stuff that may not need to be there. Get rid of some things that are taking up too much space, and let God move in and take over. If you want to get to that place of revival and anointing in your life, you will have to deal with a wilderness of distraction and earthly business to get there.

You might need to let go of some relationships that are draining you emotionally and spiritually. There may be some unproductive habits that need to be broken in your life such as watching television and movies excessively or overspending. Do you have a hobby or leisure activity that is requiring more time than you give to God every

week? Whatever is complicating your relationship with God, it must be dealt with in order to move forward toward the promise land.

Don't be afraid to take a break and contemplate the next move. Pray and ask God to help you refocus on the mission He has for your life. He gave us this awesome promise in Proverbs 16:7 – *When a man's ways please the Lord, He makes even His enemies be at peace with him...*

Chapter 5 - Questions for Study and Meditation:

1. Do you feel like everything is going smoothly in your life and family right now? Why or Why Not?
2. Is there a chance that God is trying to get you to Refocus, Reprioritize and Reorganize? Explain.
3. Are you regularly making time for family? Do you enjoy it or dread it?
4. Do you have regular family time with God other than at church? If so, what are you learning from it?
5. How do you respond to "correction" or improvement suggestions from others?
6. Do you have someone in your life that you trust to be a "voice of God" for you? If so, who is it and why do you trust them? If not, is there someone you have not considered yet?(Suggestion: Your Pastor or Elder)
7. What things are taking up too much of your time and energy that could be removed from your weekly schedule?
8. What habits or disciplines will you work on this week/month to be more efficient where God has you right now?
9. Tell of a situation where God sent someone to you and they helped you with something that changed your life.
10. Write out a short prayer to God about the issues this chapter study has exposed in your life, thank Him for "voices" of reason and ask Him to help you be willing to change and adjust as the need arises.

CHAPTER SIX

Wilderness Lesson 6: Power Encounter

Experiencing the Awesome Power of God

READING: EXODUS 19-20

Key Verses: Exodus 19:18

And mount Sinai was altogether on a smoke, because the LORD descended upon it in fire: and the smoke thereof ascended as the smoke of a furnace, and the whole mount quaked greatly.

Have you ever physically experienced the power of electricity? It will change your life forever! The first time you feel that power voltage flowing through your body you develop a definite awareness and respect for electricity. Most children have never seen or experienced what electricity is capable of doing so they have a hard time understanding the full spectrum of its power. Christians that have never had a powerful experience with Jesus Christ are much the same as those children.

We can be truly changed by God's power, but we have to experience it for ourselves. If someone has a powerful, life-changing experience with Jesus, they understand the realness of God's power and they want to share it with others. God wanted the children of Israel to have a powerful encounter with Him at Mt. Sinai, so he had Moses arrange it. This experience is so memorable because the awesome power of God was on display for all to see. Whenever Moses came down from the mountain after this experience, he had the Ten Commandments God had given him for the people.

What were the Ten Commandments given by God for anyways? Were they to be a negative, controlling device for the leadership of Israel? Did God mean for the commandments to be burdensome and annoying? I believe God gave these commandments to His people to protect them, help them, and bless them. This powerful encounter on Mt. Sinai was the origination of the terms of a beautiful

relationship that God intended to have with Israel. Not too different from our own marriage ceremonies in today's Western culture, it was a covenant between two willing parties.

In the eighth verse of chapter nineteen we find that the children of Israel had already given God their consent to enter into this covenant agreement. In a marriage there are certain things that are proper and others that are not proper. The parties involved in any covenant or agreement are generally the ones defining the points of agreement. What Israel was getting out of this deal is that the Almighty would be their God, and in return, they would be His people. Whenever we come into covenant with God about anything, a powerful experience is bound to occur.

In a seminary missions class, Herbert Jackson told how, as a new missionary, he was assigned a car that would not start without a push. After pondering his problem, he devised a plan. He went to the school near his home, got permission to take some children out of class, and had them push his car off. As he made his rounds, he would either park on a hill or leave the engine running. He used this ingenious procedure for two years.

Ill health forced the Jackson family to leave, and a new missionary came to that station. When Jackson proudly began to explain his arrangement for getting the car started, the new man began looking under the hood. Before the explanation was complete, the new missionary interrupted, "Why, Dr. Jackson, I believe the only trouble is this loose cable." He gave the cable a twist, stepped into the car, pushed the switch, and to Jackson's astonishment, the engine roared to life. For two years needless trouble had become routine. The power was there all the time. Only a loose connection kept Jackson from putting that power to work.

J.B. Phillips paraphrases Ephesians 1:19-20, "How tremendous is the power available to us who believe in God." When we make firm our connection with God, his life and power flow through us.

[Ernest B. Beevers.](#)

It is wonderful when God sweeps into our lives and we experience Him in ways we never thought possible. This was one of those times for the children of Israel. We serve the most powerful and awesome Deity, the Almighty God, the Everlasting Father, the Prince of Peace! Why would we ever doubt Him, why would we ever think Him less than capable to do anything? But we do. We may not actually say the words, but our actions and our lives speak volumes into how big we think GOD is!

God cares enough about each and every one of us that He wants us to truly experience His power and glory. It is in these times that our faith can be built to extraordinary heights. This does not mean that everything after these powerful experiences in our lives will be perfect. Often times it is just the opposite. It is like our strength for the battle ahead. God is preparing us with these experiences, so that when we are tested, or we fail God miserably, we know in whom we have believed. The powerful encounters are what prepare us for the miserable mundane realities of life.

In a previous chapter I mentioned the pastor I knew that had gone quite a long time (in my opinion) without feeling God. He eventually had a breakthrough, and grew closer to God through that experience. I also have another friend who recently spoke at a meeting I was attending about a similar experience. He told of the three month span of time he went through without feeling the presence of God and how he finally told God that it did not matter if he ever "felt" God again, he was going to live for Him. After he committed himself, God gave him three powerful encounters. The first where he was overcome with the presence of God, the second and third encounters were even more powerful than the first, and all happening on the same night.

One New Year's Day, in the Tournament of Roses parade, a beautiful float suddenly sputtered and quit. It was out of gas. The whole parade was held up until someone could get a can of gas. The amusing thing was this float represented the Standard Oil Company. With its vast oil resources, its truck was out of gas.

Often, Christians neglect their spiritual maintenance, and though they are "clothed with power" (Luke 24:49) find themselves out of gas.

[Steve Blankenship in God Came Near by Max Lucado, Multnomah Press, 1987, p. 95.](#)

As Christians, we will all have experiences with God that are so awesome, we never want to leave the setting we are in. This happened to Peter, James and John in Mathew 17. They were on the mountain with Jesus and saw his transfiguration and then saw Moses and Elias. This experience was so awesome that Peter said we ought to just stay and build three tabernacles right here on the mountain. That was not God's plan. Jesus told them when they were coming down from the mountain not to tell what they had seen to anyone until he was risen from the dead.

At that point, I don't think Peter, James, and John actually knew what they were in for. They didn't know Jesus would be crucified, and that he would rise from the dead. They didn't understand why they could not just stay in God's presence on the mountain with the other holy men. God was trying to prepare them for what they were going to go through. Each one of them had a very important role to perform in the early church and carrying on the Gospel of Jesus Christ. This experience was what they needed in order to better understand the Power of Jesus Christ. We all need to have a powerful encounter with God, and if we are faithful to follow Him in what we know, we definitely will.

The encounter does not mean this is where our life is meant to stop. We must keep moving; our destination is beyond the promise land. There are still more encounters to experience and lessons to be learned, but these times of refreshing in the presence of God will go a long way to keeping our faith and trust where it needs to be – in GOD.

It is not too long after this encounter in Exodus 19 that God gives the people (through Moses) the moral and civil laws for them to live by. Somewhere in all the instruction, the people began to be disconnected, which led to another powerful

encounter, but it was not of the “good” variety. Having a positive powerful encounter is necessary, as is having negative ones when appropriate. Follow after God and seek His wisdom and direction in all things. God is able in every situation you face, the question is...will you trust Him?

What have you experienced in your life from God that made you know He was capable to do anything? If you have some of those types of experiences, don't keep them to yourself...SHARE THEM! Not only will the person you tell benefit from it, but you will also be blessed and reminded of God's awesome power in your life.

WHAT'S NEXT?

Exodus is stuffed full of lessons and principles for us to glean from. The children of Israel have already come through so many things. God has been good to them and now He is blessing them mightily. Moses goes away to talk to God for a little while and the people down at the bottom of the mountain get themselves in a heap of trouble. What would they learn from their next experience and what can we learn from it? Keep reading to find out.

Chapter 6 - Questions for Study and Meditation:

1. Have you ever truly experienced God in a powerful way that was unmistakable? When and how?
2. How has the power of God changed you, or how do you want the power of God to change you?
3. How is a child and electricity like some people and the power of God?
4. Have you entered into a covenant (agreement) with God, and what exactly are the terms?
5. What benefits do you receive (personally) from being in a relationship with God?
6. What loose connections might be “tightened” in your life in order to activate the power of God more readily?
7. What good has doubting God ever done for you? Explain your answer.
8. Tell of a time when you felt like you were “out of gas” spiritually, and it kept you from being what you knew God wanted you to be.
9. What have your “Power encounters” with God proven to you that God is able or wants to do in your life and family (or ministry)?

10. Write out a short prayer to God about the issues this chapter study has exposed in your life, thank Him for the powerful encounters and ask Him to help you trust in His power and not in your own.

CHAPTER SEVEN

Wilderness Lesson 7: The Trust Test

The Big Temptation to Place Trust Elsewhere

READING: EXODUS 32

Key Verse: Exodus 32:8

*They have turned aside quickly out of the way which I commanded them: they have made them a molten calf, and have worshipped it, and have sacrificed thereunto, and said, **These be thy gods**, O Israel, which have brought thee up out of the land of Egypt.*

I cannot give you the formula for success, but I can give you the formula for failure, which is: Try to please everybody.

—Herbert Bayard Swope in Leadership, Vol. 1, no. 3.

The children of Israel had come a long way from the days of bondage and being slave-driven in Egypt. By Exodus chapter 32, God had delivered His chosen people Israel and brought them through many difficult places. He has provided food and water for them; He has taken care of their every need. God has given them the Ten Commandments to live by in order to make their lives better. He has instructed them in sanitary issues and every day living matters. They had the most powerful encounter with God that anyone had ever experienced up to that time.

We left the previous chapter of this book with the twentieth chapter of Exodus. In between chapter 20 and chapter 32 there is a lot of instruction given in order to provide a better way of life for God's people. Israel was now having major difficulty dealing with the issue of Moses being gone so much in the presence of the Lord while receiving these special instructions. In Moses' absence from the people, Aaron was selected to be the part-time leader and he chose to give the people what they wanted.

There is always a problem with leadership that just gives people what they want. It takes a true leader to stand up to the popular opinion and the voices with opposing ideas when doing the right thing is involved. Aaron was not Moses; God had placed Moses as leader of His people. The people's first mistake was undermining the leadership that God had placed in their lives. Did they have a right to be upset, or irritated with Moses or God for taking so long? Even if they did, they had no right to replace Moses or undermine his God-given authority.

IRRITATION

In wilderness times every child of God will at some stage get to a place where they find themselves irritated with God and/or the leadership God has ordained in their lives. This is not something new, it happened with Israel in the wilderness and more than once. It is not wrong to be irritated or to have questions, nor is it wrong to ask those questions, but it should be handled in the right way. The right way is NOT UNDERMINING that authority in your life.

With the irritation comes a great temptation. The temptation is to take things into your own hands, do it yourself, or trust in something other than God for the answer. The Temptation of Who-Do-You-Trust is a major temptation in the life of every child of God. If you put your life into God's hands to begin with, why would you take it out? Irritation with authority will summon temptation, so beware!

The Temptation Nest

Temptations, of course, cannot be avoided, but because we cannot prevent the birds from flying over our heads, there is no need that we should let them nest in our hair.

—Martin Luther, "Martin Luther—The Early Years," *Christian History*, no. 34.

Whenever a person or family gets irritated with leadership (or God) there are only two ways they can go. The first is to pray about it, and ask God for the peace and patience it will take to help you see the other side and understand what is going on in the big picture (the choice of Simple Submission). This choice works almost every time, there are still some instances where the Godly leadership is at fault or has made a grievous mistake. Whenever this happens, sometimes it is difficult for the offended party to let go of the offense and move on.

REBELLION

This scenario still does not justify the second response to irritation, which is Open Rebellion. Open Rebellion is the only other choice besides simple submission. It is a TRUST issue, who do you trust? If you trust God, you know that He can handle the situation and you leave it in His hands. If you do not trust God with your life or the life of your family, then you have a tendency to lash out in open rebellion, as did the

children of Israel. Whenever we try to handle things on our own and not let God take care of them it is a form of Pride and Rebellion in our lives. Rebellion leads to Murmuring (complaining).

Clean Mirrors?

According to a radio report, a middle school in Oregon faced a unique problem. A number of girls were beginning to use lipstick and would put it on in the bathroom. After they put on their lipstick, they would press their lips to the mirrors leaving dozens of little lip prints.

Finally the principal decided that something had to be done. She called the girls to the bathroom and met them there with the custodian. She explained that all these lip prints were causing a major problem for the custodian, who had to clean the mirrors every day. To demonstrate how difficult it was, she asked the custodian to clean one of the mirrors. He took out a long-handled brush, dipped it into the toilet, and scrubbed the mirror. Since then there have been no lip prints on the mirrors. Try thinking of this story when you're tempted. If you could only see the real filth you'd be kissing, you wouldn't be attracted to it.

—Kay, Brent. *Leadership Journal*, "To Illustrate Plus," Vol. 21, No. 1, p. 69.

MURMURING (COMPLAINING)

While reading the book of Exodus it is hard to believe that these Israelites who God continued to bless could have any gripes whatsoever. Hadn't God already done enough for them? We must keep a few interesting points in mind: (A) They were still HUMAN after all, and (B) they did not have the Spirit of God living inside of them. Complaining is the natural tendency of humanity when things don't go our way. We are creatures of comfort, we like things to be as good as possible. Whenever there is pride and rebellion in our hearts, complaining will be present ten out of ten times.

For Your Information

Over coffee: "All I'm trying to say is that certain people might think that 12:15 is a little late to be getting out of church, that a pastor doesn't need three weeks of vacation, that your office is offensive, that a guy my age doesn't need a guy your age telling me how to raise my kids, and that if it weren't for your crazy Third World projects we could have repaved our parking lot by now. I'm not saying those are MY opinions, of course. I just thought you should know what others might be thinking."

—Cartoonists David B. McGinnis and Scott Becker in *Leadership*, Vol. 12, no. 3.

JUDGMENT

Complaining, Pride and Rebellion will take us right smack dab into the JUDGMENT of God. No one likes to find himself or herself in God's Judgment, but

that is where this progression leads us. The good news is that wrath of God doesn't last very long, just long enough to get the point across. God will allow certain events to show us the right way and help us to be sorry for the actions we have taken out of pride and rebellion. It is His way of getting our attention and letting us know that He is, in fact, in control! The Judgment of God, while not pleasant, is necessary.

My Honda Odyssey has this little warning light that lights up whenever I get down below an eighth of a tank of gas. Sometimes that little light really bugs me. It has a habit of coming on when I'm in the middle of nowhere, just after I've passed the gas station on the interstate and the next exit is 40 miles away. So what would you think if I told you I'm going to take my van to Honda and have them remove that little light? You would say - that's ridiculous. My problem is not the little red light. My problem is the empty gas tank.

For many of us, our problem is not our leader that tries to warn us of impending danger. Our problem is we don't like anybody to tell us anything.

CONFESSION

Without the Judgment of God we would not be able to get things straightened out. We should choose to get right when God judges us. The alternative is to grow colder and harder in our spirits. This makes us more defiant, more proud and more rebellious leading us to; you guessed it, even GREATER JUDGMENT from God. If we choose to get right, the next step is Confession. Confession is good for the soul, the Bible says. If we truly want to be right with God, confession should be part of our every-day lifestyle. Realizing and confessing our faults and sins to God daily will keep us humble. Humility is what gets God's attention, but He turns away from the proud.

RESTORATION

If we confess, He is faithful and just to forgive us and cleanse us. Finally, Restoration is the last stage of this saga. The children of Israel after a horrible experience of God's judgment are forgiven by God and allowed back into His favor with restoration. The Stages we see Israel go through in this "trust test" are:

- Irritation,
- Rebellion,
- Murmuring,
- Judgment,
- Confession, and lastly
- Restoration.

This all happened because they failed to TRUST God, and tried to handle things on their own.

Fighting the Real Battles:

The February 26, 1974 edition of *Insight* told the story of Major William Martin, a British subject who is buried near Huelvo on the southern coast of Spain. Martin never knew the great contribution he made to the Allied success in the Second World War, especially in Sicily, because he died of pneumonia in the foggy dampness of England before he ever saw the battlefield. The Allies had invaded North Africa. The next logical step was Sicily.

Knowing the Germans calculated this, the Allies determined to outfox them. One dark night, an Allied submarine came to the surface just off the coast of Spain and put Martin's body out to sea in a rubber raft with an oar. In his pocket were secret documents indicating the Allied forces would strike next in Greece and Sardinia.

Major Martin's body washed ashore, and Axis intelligence operatives soon found him, thinking he had crashed at sea. They passed the secret documents through Axis hands all the way to Hitler's headquarters. So while Allied forces moved toward Sicily, thousands and thousands of German troops moved on to Greece and Sardinia—where the battle wasn't.

Satan works with more cunning than even the Allied plan, getting us to fight many temptations in places where the real battle isn't. Often, temptations hurt us most where we least expect them.

—*Vialo Weis, Ardmore, Oklahoma. Leadership, Vol. 11, no. 3.*

Our carnal (fleshly) thinking will lead us to believe that God and His leaders are not doing things the way they should be done and we could do a better job ourselves. Paul said that we must learn to walk in the Spirit, so we don't become controlled by our carnal and selfish thought patterns. No one is perfect; we will all have a tendency to fall into this dangerous pattern that Israel fell into in Exodus 32. The key is what you do when you recognize it.

Whenever you realize (or someone close to you helps you realize) that you are off track spiritually, you must take action quickly. Go immediately to God as well as someone you trust spiritually (preferably the pastor/leader in your life) and let them help you. God can help you. God will also help that person you trust to lead you back to where you need to be. It is important to get back as quickly as possible. The longer you put it off, the more likely you are to dive straight into the Judgment of God.

Democracy:

For centuries people have blocked, frustrated, humiliated, and oppressed other people to "keep them in their place." Whites have done this wickedness to blacks, rich to poor, men to women. Victims of this oppression have rightly sought to be free.

But a great spiritual danger always accompanies the democratic spirit. The danger is that we may seek to rid our lives of not only human but also divine dominion The danger in a popular democracy is that we may try to democratize God. If we don't like God's program, if "our eyes are opened" and we conclude that God isn't necessarily any better qualified than we are, we can simply vote him out and run for office ourselves.

—Cornelius Plantinga, Jr. in *Assurances of the Heart*. *Christianity Today*, Vol. 41, no. 10.

Fortunately, God will not give up on you. He will not let you stay in a state of Rebellion and Pride, because He loves you. He will make every attempt to shake you from that state of mind. If you need more proof, study Nebuchadnezzar in Daniel chapter 4. Turn to God, Trust Him; He will never let you down.

WHAT'S NEXT?

It is difficult to learn the hard lessons from God. These types of lessons actually hurt and bring real pain. Pain is our friend. It lets us know when something is wrong, and it lets us know that we are still alive. Be thankful for the pain God allows in your life, He will not leave you there alone. If you have learned the great lesson of chapter 7, reading the next chapter will inspire you. In chapter 8 we will discuss the abundant blessings of completely committing to God's way for your life.

Chapter 7 – Questions for Study and Meditation:

1. Was there ever a situation in your life that caused you to be irritated with God? Explain.
2. Have you ever been frustrated with the Godly authority in your life? If so, why? How did you handle the frustration?
3. Are you more of the simple submission type or the open rebellion type? Give an example.
4. Do you often feel the need to complain about things? What things do you find yourself complaining about the most?
5. Does complaining about things make them better or worse for you? Please explain.
6. What judgment have you received from God that you learned from? What did you learn?
7. Do you have a testimony from a trust test, that you feel you passed and God blessed you for it?

8. What would you tell someone that came to you and was irritated with the leader in his or her life? How could you help them, without becoming a gossip partner?
9. This week, how will you walk in the Spirit, so you don't become controlled by carnal and selfish thought patterns? What disciplines will you practice to keep your mind stayed on Him?
10. Write out a short prayer to God about the issues this chapter study has exposed in your life, thank Him for trust tests and ask Him to help you stay strong whenever you find yourself at odds with your authority figure(s).

CHAPTER EIGHT

Wilderness Lesson 8: Going God's Way

Learning the Way that Pleases the Lord

READING: EXODUS 33-35

Key Verses: Exodus 33:13

*Now therefore, I pray thee, if I have found grace in thy sight, shew me now **thy way**, that I may know thee, that I may find grace in thy sight: and consider that this nation is thy people.*

Wake-Up Call

My husband and I got a late start for home after our daughter's wedding three hours away. I'd been battling a respiratory infection and couldn't wait to get into my own bed. As we talked about how beautiful everything had turned out, I began to drift off to sleep.

Suddenly, there was a terrible shimmying and weaving of the car. I thought, We're in an accident, but kept my eyes closed out of fear.

I felt the same shaking, then nothing more. Opening my eyes, I realized we were in the ditch in the middle of the divided highway, still speeding along on cruise control.

Finally, my husband, always composed, shut off the cruise control and steered the car back up onto the interstate.

A couple of miles down the road I said, "Did you fall asleep?"

"Yes."

"Do you want me to drive?"

"No," he said with his usual composure. "I'm wide awake now."

—Doris Hier, Kewanee, Ill. *Christian Reader*, "Lite Fare."

In Exodus chapter 32 we can clearly see God's judgment and the process of restoration that we must go through in order to come back to Him. This was Israel's wake up call. We found out that trusting in anything other than the One, True, and Living God would only result in loss and heartache. Now we move into a very vital part of the book of Exodus. The next few chapters in Exodus may seem a bit "over the top", but God is letting the Hebrew nation know what is pleasing to Him, and what is not.

This information comes about as a result of the judgment of God in the previous chapter. Moses counsels with God to find out what would please Him. Moses tells God that he wants to *know* Him and he wants to see His Glory. The children of Israel were very fortunate to have a good leader. Moses was a man that stood in the gap between God and His people and interceded on their behalf. It was Moses' prayers and communication with God that ultimately saved the nation from destruction.

It is very easy to criticize and point fingers at the leadership, but slowly the Israelites were learning to respect the leader that God had given them. They had endured the pain of God's judgment and now realized that it had a purpose. The purpose of their pain was to encourage them to remain in right relationship with God and the leadership God had given them. Now Moses was seeking Wisdom from God to help the people know what would please God.

For the next several verses we find Moses explaining the Way of God to the Hebrew nation. They were given the Ten Commandments again in specific detail. The Way of God is available for anyone who is genuinely seeking after it. Moses and the children of Israel had come to a place that they were no longer satisfied with just roaming around aimlessly anymore. They desired to go in the direction that would please God the most.

Whenever we are willing to turn over the navigation of our lives to Jesus Christ, something very powerful takes place. There will still be some rough times along the way, but knowing the Way of God will help in not getting sidetracked so easily.

In the church today, there is a major shift going on. Some churches call their worship services "seeker-sensitive" or "seeker-friendly". That indicates that now they are targeting their services to fulfill the needs of those who are not part of their current membership. They use contemporary music, shorter messages (usually appealing to personal needs over doctrinal truths), drama, and performance-based worship in order to reach out to this "un-churched" crowd. They rarely take offerings or make altar calls because they do not want to in any way offend the "seeker" or keep them from returning.

While this is a good approach for getting people introduced to a church or body of believers, seldom is it a good method for helping people GROW and MATURE in their faith and trust in God. The reality we face in America today is that we have places masquerading as "churches," but they are little more than glorified religious "social clubs." Some may say, "well at least those people are going to church now." The problem with this philosophy is that if the church is catering to you all the time, you begin to believe that the church is all about YOU!

An Eclipse Is Not Unseen

Take heed to yourselves also because there are many eyes upon you. So there will be many who observe your fall. If you miscarry, the world will also echo with it. It is the same as the eclipses of the sun in broad daylight—they are seldom without witnesses.

—Richard Baxter in *The Reformed Pastor*. *Christianity Today*, Vol. 40, no. 2.

Every person I know is a “Christian.” Rarely ever do I meet someone who believes they might not be saved and going to heaven. The false security that the “churches” of today have given people is scary. People don’t really care about pleasing God anymore. They are more concerned with what God and church do for them. If a church today does not “meet people’s perceived needs” they will find another church that does. I am not against having good programs and being active and involved in the community, but there comes a time when you just have to ask the important question. “WHAT IS PLEASING TO GOD”?

Whenever you get your answer from God and the Word of God, you then have an important choice to make. Do I follow after God in what I know, or do I find another church/preacher that will make me feel comfortable in what I am already doing?

Moses was not interested in just getting by. He did not want to have another “golden-calf” experience. As leader of the children of Israel, Moses’ purpose became knowing and pleasing God. The Way of God is the noblest pursuit that any child of God could undertake. Take the time to find out what makes God happy and unhappy in your life. Renew your conscience with the Word of God, through confession and repentance. Ask God for a clean heart and a right spirit. Life means so much more, when you know that you are following God’s Way.

Prayer Enables Us to Hear

The value of persistent prayer is not that He will hear us ... but that we will finally hear Him.

—William McGill, quoted in *Men of Integrity*, Vol. 4, no. 3.

Straight is the gate and narrow is the way that leads to life eternal, and few there be that find it. It is the King’s Highway. The Highway of Holiness. Jesus said, “I am THE WAY, the Truth and the Life.” To be a Christian means more than just going to church and being a good person. Being a Christian means you are “CHRIST-LIKE.” God building a church and people building a crowd are two totally different things. Too many people gauge success or failure based on the size of a membership or ministry. Numbers are not always an accurate indicator in the church.

We read about the people in Genesis 11 who were all working together with GREAT SUCCESS building the tower to heaven. God looked down and said that because of their unity nothing was impossible for them. The Babylonians were not even Christians, they were just people that had come together for a common cause. Just because people come together and build something and it looks successful doesn't always mean it is in the will of God or the way God wants it to be. God had to come down and confuse the people in order to shut down production. No matter how large the congregation or facilities, if it is not built on the principles, truths and doctrines of God's Word, it is just another man-made tower.

The children of Israel with their leader Moses wanted to find and follow the way God had for them. This way would lead them into the promises of God for them, and the blessings of God for the generations to come. They took the time and the effort to listen and take down the important information that would help them remain pleasing to the Lord. Then they put it into practice. Finding the way of God for your life and your family will not be the most difficult part of your wilderness journey. Putting aside selfish desires and following in God's way is more difficult than just going with the flow. It will take desire and discipline for a child of God to make it to the promise land and beyond. Most of the blessings God had promised the children of Israel were conditional upon their obedience and their following Him.

Seeing the Reflection in the Bible

It was Helmut Thielicke, the German theologian, who said that in studying these stories of Jesus the viewpoint is everything. To illustrate what he meant, he told of a time when his son was just a babe in arms. He held the youngster up in front of a mirror. The baby moved; the reflection moved. Baby waved; the reflection waved. Suddenly the youngster's face lit up. He realized, *That's me!* Every so often that happens when you're reading the Bible. You pick it up, and it's black print on a white page, telling stories about the long ago and far away. But as you read the text, the print seems to disappear. On the page of Scripture, you see a reflection of yourself.

—Haddon Robinson, "A Case Study of a Mugging," *Preaching Today*, Tape No. 102.

We must look to God and to His Word for the WAY that is pleasing to Him. That is why God gave us His Word and why He ordained Apostles, Prophets, Evangelists, Pastors and Teachers. God wants us to grow and mature in His way for our lives. His way will get us to the promise land; His way will take us into His blessings and His anointing in our lives. We cannot continue on our own way, but we must surrender to His way. The Bible tells us in Proverbs 14 and 16 that there is a way that seemeth right unto a man, but the end thereof are the ways of death. James tells us lust brings about sin and sin brings death. To follow in God's Way means to forsake our own way.

Is there an area of your life that you have not turned over to God's control? Are there things that you do even though you know it is really not what God wants for your life? Has God dealt with you about something that you are just not willing to let loose

of? The children of Israel could only receive the blessings of God and the promise land when they were willing to go God's way. Their way led to plagues, sickness, death and division. God's way led them to peace, safety and joy. Not much has changed today; the way of God is always the BEST way.

One of my favorite Christian songs in the 90s was by Fred Hammond. The words went something like this... "I want to know Your way, so I can please You each and every day. If I've found favor in Your sight, teach me Your ways, Your ways." This should be a daily prayer for any person who claims to be a "Christian." How can we claim to be Christ-Like and not walk in a way that is pleasing to God? Start today, ask God what you could do, or not do, that would please Him more. As in any positive relationship, effort must be made in order to be pleasing to the other party. We must make it our top priority to please God! Not self! Not Others! We must please God in every area of our life.

WHAT'S NEXT?

Once you have decided that you are going to go God's way, and your main desire is to please Him always, your life will become simpler – even though it may feel more difficult at times. You will be free to do what the next chapter explains which is selling out to God. There are tremendous benefits that go with complete commitment. In chapter 9 we will discuss some of them.

I came across the following poem and while the source is unknown, I found it very fitting.

Christ for sickness, Christ for health,
Christ for poverty, Christ for wealth,
Christ for joy, Christ for sorrow,
Christ today and Christ tomorrow;
Christ my Life, and Christ my Light,
Christ for morning, noon and night,
Christ when all around gives way
Christ my everlasting Stay;
Christ my Rest, and Christ my Food
Christ above my highest good,
Christ my Well-beloved Friend
Christ my Pleasure without end;
Christ my Savior, Christ my Lord
Christ my Portion, Christ my God,
Christ my Shepherd, I His sheep
Christ Himself my soul to keep;
Christ my Leader, Christ my Peace
Christ hath wrought my soul's release,
Christ my Righteousness divine
Christ for me, for He is mine;
Christ my Wisdom, Christ my Meat,

Christ restores my wandering feet,
Christ my Advocate and Priest
Christ who ne'er forgets the least;
Christ my Teacher, Christ my Guide,
Christ my Rock, in Christ I hide,
Christ the Ever-living Bread,
Christ His precious Blood hath shed;
Christ hath brought me nigh to God,
Christ the everlasting Word
Christ my Master, Christ my Head,
Christ who for my sins hath bled;
Christ my Glory, Christ my Crown,
Christ the Plant of great renown,
Christ my Comforter on high,
Christ my Hope, draws ever nigh.

Chapter 8 – Questions for Study and Meditation:

1. Have you ever had a spiritual wake-up call? Explain.
2. Do you feel like you might be wandering around aimlessly in the wilderness? If so, what would it take to get you to go God's way?
3. What types of things could your family follow God more closely in?
4. What things in your personal life or ministry is God dealing with you about that you could do or not do that would be more pleasing to Him?
5. To you, what is the difference between "building a church" and "building a crowd"?
6. What things could you put into practice this week that you feel would be "God's Way" for your life or family?
7. List at least 2 scriptures you have seen yourself in recently, and tell why they reflected you?
8. Write out a short prayer to God about the issues this chapter study has exposed in your life, thank Him for His Will and His Way for your life and ask Him to help you always know His way for your life and give you the courage to walk in it.

CHAPTER NINE

Wilderness Lesson 9: Complete Commitment

Selling Out for the Work of God

READING: EXODUS 35-36

Key Verses: Exodus 35:21

And they came, every one whose heart stirred him up, and every one whom his spirit made willing, and they brought the Lord's offering to the work of the tabernacle of the congregation, and for all his service, and for the holy garments.

Fifty-six men signed the Declaration of Independence. Their conviction resulted in untold sufferings for themselves and their families. Of the 56 men, five were captured by the British and tortured before they died. Twelve had their homes ransacked and burned. Two lost their sons in the Revolutionary Army. Another had two sons captured. Nine of the fifty-six fought and died from wounds or hardships of the war. Carter Braxton of Virginia, a wealthy planter and trader, saw his ships sunk by the British navy. He sold his home and properties to pay his debts and died in poverty. At the battle of Yorktown, the British General Cornwallis had taken over Thomas Nelson's home for his headquarters. Nelson quietly ordered General George Washington to open fire on the Nelson home. The home was destroyed and Nelson died bankrupt. John Hart was driven from his wife's bedside as she was dying. Their thirteen children fled for their lives. His fields and mill were destroyed. For over a year, he lived in forest and caves, returning home only to find his wife dead and his children vanished. A few weeks later, he died from exhaustion.

[Kenneth L. Dodge, *Resource*, Sept./ Oct., 1992, p. 5.](#)

Let's briefly recap where we have covered in the first eight lessons of Wilderness Survival. There have been both positive and negative lessons, but they have all been

important to future success.

Lesson 1: Victorious Times – Celebrating Deliverance and times of joy because of the Hand of God.

Lesson 2: Finding Water – When there are times of dryness and dehydration, just be patient, God will supply.

Lesson 3: Finding Food – There will be times when finances/food are not as plentiful as at other times, God will take care of you.

Lesson 4: Direct Opposition – Just because we have been called out and delivered does not mean we will never face any more opposition. There will be times of battle, but with God we win.

Lesson 5: Revising the Plan – When what you are doing is not working as well as it should be, it is time to get a better plan. God will send the right people at the right time in your life if you trust in Him.

Lesson 6: Power Encounter – Some times in our spiritual lives we will have encounters with God and they will remind us just how incredible God truly is. We should reverence God, and allow Him room to move in our lives.

Lesson 7: The Trust Test – Every Christian will face times of disappointment and irritation with their Godly leaders. The best thing to do is to TRUST God, and let Him work it out. Don't put something else in God's place just because you aren't getting along with God's leader.

Lesson 8: Going God's Way – Finally after getting through the judgment of God the children of Israel learned how to go God's way, and learned more of what pleased Him. If we are ever going to make it through the wildernesses of life, we will have to please God.

And now here we are, we have learned so much from the children of Israel. In Exodus chapter 35, we find Israel at a time of complete commitment to God and to His work. They wanted to do whatever they could to see the work of God go forward. We see the Israelites willing to bring whatever was needed to help construct the tabernacle and the special pieces of furniture for the tabernacle that God required of them.

They brought gold, linen, jewels, or whatever else was necessary to do their part. This showed their commitment to the cause. The Bible explains that those who were involved and committed were "whom his spirit made willing." That means that it might not have been every last one of them. Importantly, there were enough of them. Not everyone is going to feel overwhelmed by the Spirit of God to do something. Many of them saw the need and wanted to be involved, and it was their own spirit motivating them.

Lust in final form spends everything to purchase headstones. All passions die in graveyards.

—Calvin Miller in *A Symphony in Sand*. *Christianity Today*, Vol. 34, no. 13.

Why do some people wait until a divine act of God to give or do anything when it comes to the work of God? Others do things all the time out of the willingness of their own spirit. The reason there is such a huge contrast between these two is their human spirit. In over 30 years of being around the work of God, many times I have seen people who were not even solid members of churches do more for the church, the minister, and the work of God than some of the church's faithful members. It has to be in your heart and spirit to be a willing and giving person.

A missionary society wrote to David Livingstone and asked, "Have you found a good road to where you are? If so, we want to know how to send other men to join you." Livingstone wrote back, "If you have men who will come only if they know there is a good road, I don't want them. I want men who will come if there is no road at all." - *Good News Broadcaster*, April, 1985, p. 12.

No one can force this issue and have a positive result. It is very sad to me to see preachers and churches struggle to survive when the resources needed to make a great impact on their community sits in the sanctuary every Sunday. In our society, there are so many things to contribute to. On any given day, most of us are solicited for donations, some form of giving or a purchase opportunity. While some of these things might be worthy causes, the Work of God through our local churches is the most important cause we can support.

Through our local churches much can be accomplished. Missionaries can be funded, ministries can be blessed, and evangelism can thrive in the local community as well as nationally. Renovations, maintenance and new building projects should be exciting to a local church. These things mean that we care about the work of God and seeing it furthered. Our finances and our energy should be offerings that we willingly give to this great cause. If everyone just does his or her part, imagine what the total impact could be.

When Julius Caesar landed on the shores of Britain with his Roman legions, he took a bold and decisive step to ensure the success of his military venture. Ordering his men to march to the edge of the Cliffs of Dover, he commanded them to look down at the water below. To their amazement, they saw every ship in which they had crossed the channel engulfed in flames. Caesar had deliberately cut off any possibility of retreat. Now that his soldiers were unable to return to the continent, there was nothing left for them to do but to advance and conquer! And that is exactly what they did.



Caesar landing in Britain

Investing in the House of God and the Work of God are extremely beneficial in this life and in the life to come. When a person or a family makes an investment, they are actually setting the table for God to bless them.

Imagine with me what it must have been like for the people to see their gifts and offerings in operation in the tabernacle. I think that some of them probably pointed them out to their children and their friends and said, "Wow, look at that – see how that fits right in there, that used to be in our dwelling place and now it is part of God's dwelling place." There was extreme gratification in seeing everything come together for the house of God.

I remember when I was around 10 years old, living in Toledo, Ohio. My dad was the assistant pastor and one of the main people over the building project of a new sanctuary to seat 1,000 people. Every day my father was out there, and many days when I would get out of school, I would see him and sometimes get to help. I remember sweeping up the dust from the drywall in the new prayer room and taking loads of trash out to the dumpster. I loved getting to be part of what was going on.

When it was all said and done, my dad had spent thousands of hours working and overseeing the new building. I used to love to take tours of it with him whenever he was showing people who would come to visit the church. He was so proud to be a part of such a great work. He could tell you all the ins and outs of the facility, and he knew all the special touches. I remember what it was like to be just a small part of that, and be very proud of my father for being such a large part. That feeling of accomplishment has never faded. I learned so much about giving and sacrificing for the work of God during those many months, and it continues to influence my thinking today.

You must get involved to have an impact. No one is impressed with the won-lost record of the referee. - [John H. Holcomb](#), [The Militant Moderate \(Rafter\)](#).

Today giving and sacrificing for the work of God is just as important, and just as gratifying as it has ever been. Everyone has a part to play in furthering the Kingdom of God. There are no Big (I)s and little (You)s in the Kingdom of God; everyone is important. True, even if some don't get involved a church, they can still have an impact in a local community. But, how much bigger of an impact could that church have if everyone did his or her part?

These times of complete commitment are critical because you are investing in the best possible future for yourself and your family. There is no telling what God will do when we make this commitment. A truly powerful occurrence in a local church is when the majority of the church experiences an attitude of complete commitment. God can do the impossible with that church in their local community and abroad.

It does not take great men to do great things; it only takes consecrated men. - [Philipps Brooks](#).

God's work is going to go forward, with or without us. We can either become part of it or allow someone else to reap the benefits and blessings by doing so. Complete commitment, means keeping God first in everything and going the extra mile to see the work of God go forward. I wonder what would happen in our churches this year if the attitude of complete commitment really caught on? The greatest revival we have ever had is waiting on us. God wants to bless, deliver, save and heal. Let's go all out this year and see what God will do in our churches and communities.

A quick word of warning: there will be times that you feel like reneging on your commitment. Don't do it. It is just a test and you will make it. Trust God and continue to do your part, God will take care of you. God is sure to bless you as you completely commit to His cause.

WHAT'S NEXT?

If we will be diligent and learn the ways of God, put them into practice in our lives and then completely commit to his cause, LOOKOUT! Because of this progression the children of Israel were now ready to enter the Promise Land. We are not very far from the blessings and overflow in our wilderness either. With the blessings comes great responsibility. Like the children of Israel we should prepare for the blessings of God in our lives, our families, and our churches. We'll discuss overflow planning in chapter 10.

Chapter 9 – Questions for Study and Meditation:

1. Can you think of a time when you were willing to give everything to God, no questions asked? Explain.
2. What does it mean to you when you hear the term - complete commitment?
3. Is there an issue that might be holding you back right now from total commitment to God and His purpose for your life? If so, what is it?
4. How is giving of your time, energy and resources to the local church an "investment" for you and your family?
5. Have you found your place in the Kingdom of God? What could you do that would be a great benefit to your church, pastor, or community? (If you are unsure, meet with your pastor or elder to discuss this soon.)
6. What things have you given to a local church in the past that, upon remembering, you still feel good about the gesture today?
7. Since we no longer bring "sacrifices" to the church like the children of Israel did in the wilderness, what type of things could we bring as a sacrifice unto God today?
8. Write out a short prayer to God about the issues this chapter study has exposed in your life, thank Him for His blessings in your life and ask Him to help you completely commit to His Kingdom this year.

CHAPTER TEN

Wilderness Lesson 10: Overflow Planning

Preparing for the Blessings of God

READING: NUMBERS 33 and JOSHUA

Key Verses: Numbers 33:53-54

And ye shall dispossess the inhabitants of the land, and dwell therein: for I have given you the land to possess it.

And ye shall divide the land by lot for an inheritance among your families: and to the more ye shall give the more inheritance, and to the fewer ye shall give the less inheritance: every man's inheritance shall be in the place where his lot falleth; according to the tribes of your fathers ye shall inherit.

Trying to condense over 40 years of Israel's historical journey to the Promise Land into a short devotional study book is virtually impossible. Hopefully this book will help those reading it be more pro-active in their relationship with God and their church. This will be accomplished if we learn from the experiences of the Children of Israel in the wilderness. This final lesson does not actually take place in Exodus, but rather beyond and into Numbers chapter 33.

There are several different perspectives of the same time period offered to us in these timeless books of the Old Testament. In Numbers 33, we read the entire trek of the Hebrews leading them to the crossing of the Jordan River. In the book of Joshua we pick up the story that begins with the changing of the guard from Moses to Joshua in leading God's people. Now Joshua will be taking over the responsibility of forward progress and distribution of the blessings of God to His people. It is an exciting time to be an Israelite; God is finally giving them what He promised them so long ago.

British sculptor Sir Jacob Epstein was once visited in his studio by the eminent author and fellow Briton, George Bernard Shaw. The visitor noticed a huge block of stone standing in one corner and asked what it was for.

"I don't know yet. I'm still making plans."

Shaw was astounded. "You mean you plan your work. Why, I change my mind several times a day!"

"That's all very well with a four-ounce manuscript," replied the sculptor, "but not with a four-ton block."

Today in the Word, April 5, 1993.

This may seem like a very insignificant portion of the book, but let me tell you from a pastor's standpoint I feel it is one of the most important. What good would it do for the Israelites to inherit the Promise Land then not have a plan on how to handle and manage it? There had to be a plan, there had to be a means for future growth and development.

Whenever we decided to have our third child, Ashton, we had to first consider where he would sleep in the home that we own. If our place weren't big enough for him, we would have to move to a bigger place. Whenever God's blessings come, we need to be ready for continued growth and development. Once God is guaranteed to get the glory out of our lives, the blessings will flow. The mistake some people make is thinking that the blessings are all about them.

A raise, an achievement, a bonus, a blessing is all BECAUSE of God. God does want to bless us; He enjoys it when we are happy. God is a Blessing God, He is a Faithful God, He is an On-Time God! No matter what He promised, He will perform it. There is no limit to His power and ability. Nothing is too big, and nothing is too insignificant for God to handle. He cares about your headache as much as He cares about your heartbreak. The Almighty God has called us out of darkness into His Marvelous Light. What a blessing just to know who He is!

The blessing does not end with salvation, nor does it end with deliverance or healing. The blessing God wants us to have is a life that is "more abundant." Whenever we are faithful in our giving, He promises to pour out a blessing that we do not have "room enough to contain." Yes we all go through difficult times, but God really wants to bless us. We should not be afraid to trust God or believe God for His promises.

Consider that family member you are praying for, God wants them to be saved, too. That burden that you have for missions and giving to the needy, God has that burden, too. Your family crisis is God's priority and He will work it out in His time because He cares for you and your family.

Blessings come to everyone God chooses to bless. It is not the blessing that we should be focused on, but what we do with the blessing is what really matters. This is why this lesson is so very important. We must be prepared to handle what God wants

to send our way. Look at Joseph for instance, he knew that the years of plenty would be followed by years of famine so he organized a plan and saved a region. As the Body of Christ, we need to realize that we must be good stewards of the blessings of God.

There is a world that needs to hear what we have heard, feel what we have felt, and know what we have learned from our relationship with God. We have a great opportunity to reach this world with the Gospel of Jesus Christ. At no other time in history has the world been as small as it is today. We have technology that allows us to communicate around the world in seconds, and travel around the world in hours. We can reach more people through this technology than some of our predecessors would have ever imagined possible. Face to face, person-to-person, relationship building is still the best witnessing tool, but reaching people easily with technology gives us a clear advantage over the previous generations.

The Hebrew nation sent spies and did some homework to figure out what to do. In the end they came into a promised land that was just incredible. They now had to take over and occupy it and manage it well. When we come out of the wilderness we will enter into that time of revival and anointing that God has promised to all of us. If we seek we will find, and if we knock the door will be opened to us. Talk to people you admire that have that anointing and blessing on their lives, and find out what it takes to stay in that blessed lifestyle. I realize that everyone is different, but we can all live a blessed life.



Ft. Knox, KY – Bullion Depository

In our great city of Radcliff, Kentucky we are preparing for great growth. The B.R.A.C. (Base Realignment and Closure) made changes on Ft. Knox that is projecting to bring hundreds of millions of dollars in revenue growth within the next few years. Thousands of dollars have been spent on researching what to do with that kind of growth, and how to handle it. Our Mayor and city government as well as the planning and development people are preparing for this major increase.

It is going to be wonderful to see the amazing increases all around us. More people, better roads, bypasses, offices, restaurants, businesses, housing developments, colleges, you name it I am looking forward to the changes. I am very

glad that our city government is developing a plan to handle this growth; by preparing for it they are making room for us to sustain these increases.

In much the same way, we need to be preparing for sustaining the blessings of God in our own lives. Not presumptuously, but within the parameters of His promises. Don't wait until they get here, start praising God and planning for a blessed future. What ministry are you going to bless? What contribution are you going to make? What would a release in your finances do for your ability to be involved at the church? How will God get the glory out of blessing you, your family or your church?

Some years ago a young man approached the foreman of a logging crew and asked for a job. "That depends," replied the foreman. "Let's see you fell this tree." The young man stepped forward and skillfully felled a great tree. Impressed, the foreman exclaimed, "Start Monday!" Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday rolled by, and Thursday afternoon the foreman approached the young man and said, "You can pick up your paycheck on the way out today."

Startled, he replied, "I thought you paid on Friday."

"Normally we do," answered the foreman, "but we're letting you go today because you've fallen behind. Our daily felling charts show that you've dropped from first place on Monday to last on Wednesday."

"But I'm a hard worker," the young man objected. "I arrive first, leave last, and even have worked through my coffee breaks!"

The foreman, sensing the boy's integrity, thought for a minute and then asked, "Have you been sharpening your ax?" The young man replied, "I've been working too hard to take the time."

K. Hughes, [Liberating Ministry From The Success Syndrome](#), Tyndale.

Taking the time to sharpen your axe is never time spent in vain. The time you spend reading this book, praying, and preparing for God's blessings is not time that is wasted. When I attended Indiana Bible College, I used to get frustrated at times wanting to be out implementing the valuable information I was learning. One of my good friend's parents told me that you could never go wrong by sharpening your axe.

Years later after I was married and had been full time ministry for a few years I went back to college to get my degree in business. Many of the things I have learned while attending college have been of great benefit to me and have helped me go further, faster. Never be afraid to apply yourself to learning and preparation for your future.

The saying goes that if you fail to plan that you plan to fail. With God on your side you will never fail, but without a plan there will only be so much that is accomplished. I want the blessings of God to not just bless me, but to overflow from me and bless everyone I know and meet. I am preparing for the tremendous blessings that God is going to grant.

If we know how to successfully navigate through the tough times, the dry times and the good times, we can make it to the best times. The Bible tells us not to be ignorant of Satan's devices. We should be aware of the things he will use to get us off track with our family, the church and our spiritual authority. We have the Word of God and the Blood of Jesus. We will have success and thrive in the wilderness as long as our relationship with God grows every day.

The Bible tells us there is no temptation that we will face that has not already been faced. It also explains that God always provides a way of escape. No matter what wilderness you find yourself in, God can bring you into your Promise Land. If God brings you to it, He will bring you through it.

Are you preparing for the blessings of God today? Why wait? Jesus came that you might have life and that *more abundant*. God wants you to grow, and be blessed; he wants to give you more hope, joy and peace than you ever imagined possible.

This book is to empower the body of Christ and thereby enable the blessings of God to flow further. I pray that after you have read this book, you will never again be satisfied with status quo spirituality. God has kept His hand on you and provided for you all along the journey. Say goodbye to the wilderness, welcome to your land of promise.

Chapter 10 – Questions for Study and Meditation:

1. What would you do for God, if you knew that you could not fail?
2. How has reading this book inspired you, and what things do you feel like God has spoken to you in your time of devotion?
3. What is a constant headache to you, that keeps you from believing God for greater things?
4. What heart-ache has held you back until now from being all that God wants you to be?
5. Explain what you feel that ABUNDANT LIFE or abundant living in Christ would look like for you?
6. If God were to bless you with one million dollars tomorrow, how would you use it for His purpose?
7. Name at least three things that you are believing God to do in your life, family, church or ministry this year:
 - a. _____
 - b. _____
 - c. _____
8. What major issue will you praise God in advance for today?
9. How do you plan to "sharpen your axe" this year in planning for God's blessings.

10. Write out a short prayer to God about the issues this chapter study has exposed in you, thank Him for His blessings that overflow in your life and ask Him to help you use those blessings to minister to others around you.